

A
CONCISE VIEW
OF
RELIGIOUS WORSHIP,
AND OF THE
NATURE AND ORDER
OF
NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES.

By WILLIAM BENNET.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. BUCKLAND, Pater-noster Row.

M.DCC.LXXXIV.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

CO. OF THE

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

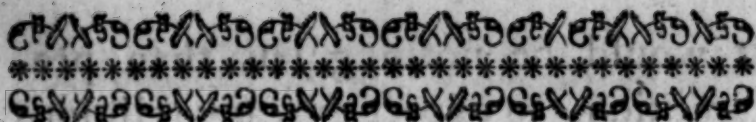
WATKINS



WILLIAM BENTLEY

LONDON

PRINTED BY



P R E F A C E.

THE *Institutions* of the Christian religion are equally of divine authority with its *Doctrines*, and a cordial subjection to the will of Christ in *these*, constitutes one principal branch of *evangelical obedience*. “For ye are my friends,” said our Lord, “if ye do whatsoever I command you *.”

It is, therefore, absolutely incumbent on those, who call themselves Christians, diligently to study the sacred scriptures, that they may form their conduct and worship according to the mind and will of Christ. For

* John xv. 14.

it would be nothing less than presumption, to expect that any religious duties should meet with divine approbation, unless they are warranted by divine authority. Nothing, indeed, is more expressly condemned in the word of God, than *Will-worship* *, and the acknowledgment of any authority in matters of religion, besides that of Him, “ who is head over all things to his body the church †; ” who hath “ ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things ‡; ” and is seated “ on the throne of David, and in his kingdom, to order it, and establish it, from henceforth even for ever §.”

To suppose that Jesus Christ, the anointed king on God's holy hill of Zion, should have left undetermined

* Col. ii. 20, 22, 23.

† Eph. i. 22.

‡ Eph. iv. 10.

§ Isa. ix. 7.

the form of gospel-worship, or have referred what respects the constitution, order, discipline and duties of his churches, to the will and wisdom of men, is highly inconsistent with that supreme and exclusive allegiance, which he claims from all his subjects, as their only Lord and lawgiver. Under the preceding dispensation, in which the worship of the sanctuary was conducted by means of "carnal ordinances *," "Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle," that he should be careful to "make all things according to the pattern shewed to him in the mount †:" how much more, then, may it be concluded, that, under the present, which is a "ministration of the Spirit that exceeds in glory ‡," the whole order

* Heb. ix. 10.

† Heb. viii. 5.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 7—11.

of God's house and worship should be strictly conformed to divine prescription and appointment!

It is much to be lamented, however, that, in the present day, the nature of the Redeemer's kingdom, the constitution of his churches, the rules of gospel-fellowship, and the scriptural plan of social religion, are very imperfectly understood by numbers of those, who are called the followers of Christ. Some do not appear to relish them. Others, perhaps without design, pass them over with silent inattention. Many, there is reason to fear, do not sufficiently consider the authority of Christ in these things, nor the advantages designed to arise from them to his subjects. And, probably, not a few are discouraged, by an apprehension of the difficulties with which they must contend,

contend, if they determine faithfully to observe whatsoever Christ has commanded.

Thus, on one account and another, many live all their days under the sound of the gospel, in the neglect of important duties, which Christ hath enjoined on all his subjects, while others are very deficient in their attention to them. And, from these circumstances, much disadvantage ariseth to the cause of Christ. Some churches are filled with disorder and confusion. Others have only the shadow of union and firmness, while, in reality, they are without strength, and continually liable to be thrown into distraction by any unfavourable circumstance that may occur. Private members of churches have not that assistance for their improvement and comfort,

which Christ hath appointed. Faithful officers often find unsurmountable difficulties in the way of their duty. And the rising generation grows up unacquainted with the nature and order of the kingdom of Christ, and destitute of those helps, which He hath ordained for the seed of his church.

Considerations of this kind induced the author to employ some of his leisure hours, in attempting to draw up a concise view of Religious Worship, and of the Nature and Order of New Testament churches, with no farther aim, at first, than to assist the Young, and those who might need such assistance, among the People to whom he statedly ministers. But, in compliance with the wishes of some of his friends and brethren in the ministry, who thought it might be
more

more extensively useful, it is now submitted to the eye of the public, with a sincere desire to serve the best interest of those, who are concerned to know and to do the will of God. How far it is adapted to this end, those who read it, have a right to judge for themselves.

In digesting and preparing this, he acknowledges himself considerably indebted to a small piece of Dr. Owen's, printed in the year 1667, and entitled, *A brief Instruction in the Worship of God, and Discipline of the Churches of the New Testament, &c.* A piece, which will afford much valuable and scriptural instruction to those, who will give it so much attention, as may be necessary to enter fully into its meaning.

And now, to the divine blessing he commends this feeble attempt to serve the cause of Christ and religion, earnestly praying, that it may have some effectual tendency to revive that union, purity, zeal and steadiness, which were the glory and the strength of the primitive churches!

LONDON,
May 22, 1784.

A CON-



A

CONCISE VIEW, &c.

Q. 1. **W**HAT is religious worship?

A. It is serving and glorifying God, in a manner agreeable to his divine nature and will. — Deut. vi. 13. Matt. iv. 10. John iv. 23, 24.

Q. 2. May not religious worship, in a subordinate sense, be paid to Creatures?

A. The scriptures admit no such distinction in religious worship, as that of *supreme* and *subordinate*, but uniformly forbid every act of religious worship addressed to any Creature, as such, even the most excellent. — Isa. xlii. 8. Acts x. 25, 26. Rev. xix. 10. ch. xxii. 9.

A 6

Q. 3. How

Q. 3. How may religious worship be distinguished?

A. Into natural or moral, and instituted worship.

Q. 4. What is natural or moral worship?

A. It is the acknowledgment of God, as a Being in himself possessed of infinite perfections, and as the Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Judge of all men; in the exercise of faith and fear, hope and love, prayer and praise, subjection and obedience. — Rev. iv. 11. Deut. x. 20. Isa. xlv. 23. Ch. xxxiii. 22. Heb. xi. 6. Isa. xxvi. 4. Ps. xxxiii. 18. Matt. xxii. 37. Ps. lxxv. 1, 2. Deut. vi. 13.

Q. 5. What is the foundation of natural worship?

A. The infinite excellency of the divine nature, and the relation subsisting between God and his intelligent creatures. — Rom. i. 20, 21. Gal. iv. 8. Acts xvii. 22—28. Ps. xcv. 1—8.

Q. 6. Why is this called moral worship?

A. Because

A. Because it ariseth out of the fitness of things, and, as it hath the moral and eternal law for its rule, the obligation to it is universal and unchangeable. — 2 Sam. xxii. 4. Ps. xviii. 3. Rev. iv. 11. Rom. ii. 14, 15. Rev. v. 11—14. Ch. vii. 11, 12, 15.

Q. 7. What is instituted worship?

A. That which hath its foundation and origin in divine appointment, which gives the visible form and order of religion, and consists in glorifying God by such outward ordinances, as he hath been pleased to establish. — Lev. xviii. 4, 5. Deut. vii. 11. Ps. v. 7. Ps. xlvi. 11, 12. 1 Cor. xi. 2.

Q. 8. What is the rule of all instituted worship?

A. Not the will of any Creature, however great, wise, or good, but the revealed will of God only; who hath given us a full discovery thereof, in all things necessary for our faith and practice, by his written word. — Isa. xxxiii. 22. ch. xlii. 8. Matt. iv. 10. Isa. viii. 20. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

Q. 9. Whence

Q. 9. Whence ariseth man's obligation to observe such instituted worship?

A. From the authority of Him who enjoins it, and from the absolute subjection which is due to his will in all things.—
Gen. xvii. 1. Pf. cxliii. 10. Matt. vi. 10.
Rom. xii. 1. Pf. xlv. 11. 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Q. 10. Have the ordinances of religious worship always been the same?

A. No; for God hath changed them from time to time, according to the several dispensations, or outward forms of worship and government, which his church hath been under.—Heb. i. 1. compared with Gen. ii. 16, 17. ch. xvii. 2, 9—11. and the books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy* at large.

Q. 11. What are the principal dispensations which the church of God, at various times, hath been under?

A. The Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian.

Q. 12. What was the patriarchal dispensation, and how long did it continue?

A. It

A. It was that, under which believers lived before the ceremonial law was given; when many families, descended from the same father, continued together in one Tribe; and every such Tribe, acknowledging the true God, and professing faith in the Saviour to come, was a distinct religious Community, and the Father, or Head of the tribe, was both its Ruler and Priest. This continued till the days of Moses.—

Gen. x. 5, 20, 31, 32. ch. xi. 31. ch. xii. 5, 8. Ch. xiii. 6, 9, 12. Ch. xx. 7. middle clause. Ch. xxvi. 24, 25. Ch. xlv. 1. Ch. xlviii. 15, 20. Job i. 5.

Q. 13. What were the principal religious institutions, under that dispensation?

A. These appear to have been Sacrifices and Oblations, till God established his covenant with Abraham and his posterity, when he appointed Circumcision, as the visible token of his covenant with that peculiar people and their seed after them.—

Gen. iv. 3, 4. ch. viii. 20, 21. ch. xvii. 9, 10.

Q. 14. What was the Mosaic dispensation, and how long did this continue?

A. It was that, which God established, by the ministry of Moses, at Mount Sinai, with the body of the Israelites at large, whom he chose to be “an holy nation, a peculiar people to himself;” under which all their natural descendants were members of the visible church.—This continued till the promised Messiah came.—Exod. xix. 5, 6. Deut. vii. 6—11. ch. xxix. 10—15. Rom. ix. 3—5. Eph. ii. 13—18.

Q. 15. What were the principal religious institutions under the Mosaic dispensation?

A. A great number of painful, costly, and laborious rites were then appointed in the church of God, such as, Circumcision, the Passover, Sacrifices, Oblations, ceremonial Purifications, solemn Assemblies of all the Males among the Israelites three times a year, and many others of a similar nature.—See the books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus*,

ticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy at large, Heb. ix. 9, 10.

Q. 16. What is the Christian dispensation, and how long shall this continue?

A. It is the pure and spiritual dispensation of Christ, which the church of God is now under; according to which, all religious worship must be conducted in the name of the Lord Jesus, without any of those costly services and painful rites, which were prescribed to the Jewish church.—This dispensation must continue till the end of the world, when the whole church shall be made perfect. — John iv. 23, 24. Heb. i. 1. Col. iii. 17. Eph. ii. 18. Heb. xii. 18—29.

Q. 17. What are the religious institutions of the Christian dispensation?

A. These are social and public Prayer—Singing the praises of God—Reading, preaching, and hearing the word—Baptism—Church-fellowship—and the Lord's supper; with all that relates to the order, government, and discipline of Christian churches. — Acts i. 14. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. Eph.

Eph. v. 19. Col. iii. 16. 1 Theff. v. 27.
 Mark xvi. 15. Luke viii. 18. James i.
 19, 21, 22. Matt. xxviii. 19. 1 Cor. xii.
 12, 20, 27. Matt. xxvi. 26—30. 1 Cor.
 xi. 23—29. ch. xiv. 40.

Q. 18. What is the nature and design of baptism?

A. It is a positive institution of Christ, by which those that engage in it, solemnly profess their faith in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; their subjection to Christ as Mediator; and their unreserved obligation to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded: by which, also, those, to whom it is administered, are acknowledged to be a part of the visible church of Christ.—Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Gal. iii. 27. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

Q. 19. Who are the proper subjects of Christian baptism?

A. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are cordially disposed to walk in subjection to his authority in all things, together with their Infant-offspring.—Mark xvi. 16. Acts viii. 37, 38.
 ch.

ch. ii. 39. ch. xvi. 15, 33. Matt.
xix. 14.

Q. 20. What is meant by church-fellowship?

A. The union, or incorporated state of baptized persons, holding the truth of Christ, and engaged to walk together in all the rules and ordinances of the gospel, under his authority, as their Saviour and Lord. — 1 Cor. xii. 12—27. Eph. iv. 3—5. Acts ii. 41, 42. Eph. v. 23. Col. i. 18.

Q. 21. What are the particular ends of church-fellowship?

A. To support and perpetuate the visible kingdom and headship of Christ among his saints; to exhibit and preserve the truth and purity of the gospel; to provide for the regular administration of divine ordinances; and, by means of these, to improve all the graces of the Spirit in believers, till they are made meet for the heavenly state. — Isa. ix. 7. Eph. ii. 20. Col. ii. 6, 7, 9, 10. 1 Tim. iii. 15. Phil. i. 27.

i. 27. 1 Cor. xi. 2. Eph. iv. 11—13.
Acts ii. 42, 46, 47. Ch. ix. 31.

Q. 22. What is the Lord's supper?

A. It is an ordinance, in which, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ's appointment, his disciples commemorate their absent Lord, and shew forth his amazing love in giving himself for them, and the atonement which he made for sin by his death; solemnly professing their hope to be founded upon it, testifying their love to him and one another, and renewing their engagements to be the Lord's. — Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 23—27. 1 John iv. 10, 11. 1 Cor. v. 8. Isa. xli. 5. 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Q. 23. Who are proper persons to partake of the Lord's supper?

A. Those in a church of Christ, who are capable of examining themselves, who have a competency of knowledge to discern the Lord's body, and who give good evidence of their faith and love. — 1 Cor. xi. 18, 28, 29. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Eph. v. 2. 1 John iv. 8—11. ch. iii. 14.

Q. 24. How

Q. 24. How is this ordinance to be administered?

A. Not to Individuals separately, or to a Church in distinct parts, but to a Church at large, when assembled together in one place; it being an ordinance for the special communion of the body of Christ.—

1 Cor. xi. 20, 33, 34. ch. x. 16, 17.

Q. 25. Is it lawful to receive this ordinance for any civil purpose?

A. The kingdom of Christ is entirely distinct and different from all the kingdoms of this world; the whole of its order and institutions is spiritual, appointed and fitted only for spiritual ends and uses; and, therefore, to receive this ordinance for the sake of any civil office, or temporal emolument, is a vile and prophane abuse of it.—John xviii. 36. Eph. iv.

11, 12. Mal. i. 12. John vi. 26, 27. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. ch. xi. 2.

Q. 26. Is there any alteration to be expected in the ordinances of religious worship under the Christian dispensation?

A. No;

A. No; for Christ hath expressly commanded, that all his ordinances be kept, without any addition or diminution, till he come. — Matt. xxviii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 26. Heb. x. 23—31. Rev. xxii. 18—20.

Q. 27. Is it right for any man, or body of men, to enjoin additions to the ordinances of Christ, even under the idea of assisting devotion, or of rendering the worship more comely?

A. By no means; for all true and acceptable devotion is the fruit of faith, which hath respect to the word of God alone; and all the beauty of Christian worship consists in its exact agreement with the appointments of Christ, who is the Head over all things to his body the church. All human additions, therefore, are not only needless, but presumptuous, because they derogate from the wisdom and authority of Christ; and are expressly forbidden by his word. — Heb. xi. 4—6. Eph. ii. 19—22. Matt. xv. 9. Col. ii. 18—23.

Q. 28. How

Q. 28. How doth it further appear to be important, that the ordinances of Christ be kept strictly according to his appointment?

A. From such considerations as these; that every gospel ordinance hath its peculiar use and proper end; that God hath promised his presence only in the ways of his own appointment; that he is jealous of his honour in respect to religious institutions; and, that divine judgments have been inflicted on some, for slighting or abusing them.——Rom. vi. 3, 4. Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 26. Exod. xx. 24. Matt. xviii. 20. Heb. xii. 29. Deut. vi. 14, 15. Lev. x. 1, 2. 1 Cor. xi. 29, 30.

Q. 29. By whom hath Christ appointed his ordinances to be observed?

A. By the congregations or churches of his people, who, as united in Christian fellowship, are the proper subjects of his regal authority and government.——Eph. iv. 1—16. Matt. xviii. 20. ch. xxviii. 20. Heb. iii. 1—6. Ps. ii. 6. Eph. v. 23, 24.

Q. 30. Are

Q. 30. Are there more churches of Christ than one?

A. There is but one universal or Catholic Church, which includes all who belong to Christ; but there are many particular churches of Christ, each of which may be considered as a visible representation of the universal church, and as a part of it. — Eph. iii. 15, 21. Ch. iv. 4—6. Gal. i. 2. Rom. xvi. 16.

Q. 31. What is a particular church of Christ?

A. It is a distinct society of saints and faithful brethren in Christ, with their Infant offspring, separated to the Lord by the ordinance of Christian baptism, mutually engaged to walk together in the use of all gospel ordinances, for the purposes of Christian fellowship, and, to that end, statedly meeting in one place, under the promise and authority of Christ as their Head and King. — Col. i. 2. Heb. iii. 1. 1 Cor. vii. 14. Matt. xix. 14. Ch. xxviii. 19. Acts ii. 41—47. 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, 14, 25—27. ch. xi. 20. Acts i.

13—15. Matt. xviii. 20. ch. xxviii. 20, last clause. 1 Cor. v. 4.

Q. 32. What persons are proper to become members of a Christian church?

A. Those, who are called by the grace of God to the acknowledgment of the truth which is after godliness, who make a credible profession of their faith in Christ, and are unfeignedly disposed to walk in all holy subjection to his authority. — 1 Cor. i. 2. Tit. i. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5. Acts xxvi. 18. John xv. 14. Matt. xxviii. 20.

Q. 33. How do such persons become a Christian church?

A. They are constituted such by the authority and will of Christ, on their receiving him as their Prophet, Priest and King, and voluntarily uniting to walk together in the holy and constant observation of all his institutions. — John i. 12. Isa. xlv. 5. ch. xxxiii. 22. Heb. iii. 1, 6, 14. John xv. 14.

Q. 34. What means hath Christ appointed for preserving the freedom and purity of his churches individually?

B

A. Those

A. Those of chusing their own officers, admitting or excluding members, and executing all the laws of Christ among themselves, for his glory and their own edification. — Acts vi. 3, 5. ch. xv. 22, 25. 2 Cor. viii. 19. 23. Acts ix. 26. Matt. xviii. 17, 18. 1 Cor. v. 4, 12.

Q. 35. To whom hath Christ committed the administration of divine ordinances?

A. To officers appointed in his name, and according to his will. — Matt. xxviii. 16, 19. Eph. iv. 11, 12.

Q. 36. What officers hath Christ, at any time, appointed in his church?

A. At first he appointed extraordinary officers, who were to continue only for a season, and, afterwards, ordinary officers, who are to continue till the end of the world,

Q. 37. What were those extraordinary officers?

A. They are called apostles, prophets, and evangelists. — 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 11.

Q. 38. What were the apostles?

A. They

A. They were men chosen by Christ himself, to be witnesses of his resurrection, and commissioned immediately by him to testify this important event, and to preach his gospel to all the world, as the means of proselyting the nations, and of gathering churches in his name: to which end, they were under the extraordinary direction and influence of the Holy Spirit, and were endued with miraculous gifts, which, on some occasions, they conveyed to others by the imposition of their hands. — Luke vi. 13—16. Matt. xxviii. 16, 19. Acts i. 8, 21—26. Gal. i. 1. 1 Cor. ix. 1, 2. 2 Cor. xi. 28. Eph. iii. 3—5. Gal. i. 11, 12. Acts xix. 6, 11. ch. viii. 14, 15, 17.

Q. 39. What were the Christian prophets?

A. Probably they were men favoured with the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit, enabling them, in a most convincing manner, to explain Old Testament prophecies, and to shew their accomplishment in Christ and his kingdom, as well as to predict important events, for the direction

and advantage of the church. — Acts xi. 27, 28. ch. xxi. 10, 11. Eph. iii. 5. Phil. iii. 15.

Q. 40. What were the evangelists?

A. They were men chosen by the apostles, to travel with them as fellow-labourers in preaching the gospel, and in gathering, settling, and regulating churches, according to the order of the gospel, in various parts of the world. — Acts xvi. 3—5. 2 Tim. iv. 5. Tit. i. 5.

Q. 41. Why are the apostles, prophets and evangelists called extraordinary officers?

A. Because their work itself, their call to it, and their qualifications for it, were extraordinary; and none were to succeed them in their office. — Matt. x. 1. Luke xxiv. 49. Acts ii. 2—4.

Q. 42. What are the ordinary officers of Christian churches?

A. These are bishops or elders, and deacons, whom Christ hath appointed to continue in his churches till the end of the world. — Phil. i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 1—8. Eph. iv. 13.

Q. 43. What

Q. 43. What are bishops or elders according to the New Testament?

A. They are officers appointed to the oversight and care of one particular church, to attend jointly to its religious interests, lead its worship, and to watch over all its members, instructing and guiding them in all subjection to Christ and obedience to his will.—Acts xx. 28. 1 Pet. v. 1—4. Heb. xiii. 17.

Q. 44. Is the office of bishops the same with that of elders?

A. Yes; for the same persons are called both bishops and elders in the New Testament, without the least intimation that these names are meant to signify different offices.—Compare Acts xx. 17. with ver. 28. of that chapter; and Tit. i. 5. with ver. 7. and all these with Phil. i. 1.

Q. 45. What are the proper qualifications of bishops or elders?

A. They must be men well established in the truth, wise, prudent and compassionate, holy and unblameable in their conversation, and possessed of gifts and abilities for the edification of the church

in the faithful discharge of their office.—

1 Tim. iii. 1—7. Tit. i. 6—9.

Q. 46. Had the first churches of Christ a plurality of elders?

A. It is abundantly evident that they had. And, if we consider the nature and ends of a gospel church-state, as well as the circumstances of Christians while in this world, it will appear, that such provision is highly important to the order and strength, edification and comfort of the churches of Christ.—Acts xiv. 23. ch. xv. 4, 6, 22, 23. Tit. i. 5. Phil. i. 1.

Q. 47. How doth the New Testament distinguish elders in the same church?

A. By the names of pastors or teachers, and elders that rule well.—Eph. iv. 11. Rom. xii. 7. 8. 1 Tim. v. 17.

Q. 48. What are the special duties of pastors or teachers?

A. These are various and extensive, such as,

(1.) To be examples to the church in every Christian grace, and in all holiness of conversation.—1 Tim. iv. 12. Phil. iii. 17. 1 Pet. v. 3.

(2.) To

- (2.) To watch for souls, and to attend to the spiritual interests of the whole church.—Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Pet. v. 2—4.
- (3.) To preach the word plainly and faithfully, dividing it aright, and to contend for the truth in the spirit of meekness. 2 Tim. iv. 2, 5. ch. ii. 15, 16, 22—25. Jude 3.
- (4.) To administer divine ordinances, according to the rule of the gospel. 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. 1 Tim. iii. 15.
- (5.) To teach and instruct, to admonish and reprove, to exhort and comfort, all the members, as their several circumstances may require.—1 Thess. v. 12—15. 2 Tim. ii. 24—26. ch. iv. 2. last clause.
- (6.) To preserve and promote order and discipline with fidelity, diligence and skill.—Rom. xii. 8. 1 Tim. v. 17. ch. iii. 5. 1 Cor. iv. 2.

Q. 49. Is there any distinction between the work of a pastor and that of a teacher?

B 4

A. Every

A. Every elder is to be employed, by the direction of the church, according to his abilities for usefulness. The teacher seems to be an elder, whose gifts are more especially adapted to the work of instruction, and therefore this becomes his principal business; while the pastor is an elder, furnished with gifts for every part of the pastoral work, to which he is accordingly separated.—Rom. xii. 6—8. 1 Cor. xii. 4—9. 1 Pet. v. 2.

Q. 50. What is the proper work of ruling elders?

A. To assist the pastors and teachers in the government and discipline of the church, particularly, in watching over the conduct of the members, visiting, conversing and praying with the sick and afflicted, admonishing those that walk disorderly, and stating to the church such matters as require their attention.—Rom. xii. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 28. “ helps, governments.” 1 Tim. v. 17. James v. 14. Acts xx. 17, 28—32.

Q. 51. What are the deacons of a church?

A. They

A. They are officers, appointed by a church from among the faithful and approved brethren, to superintend all its temporal affairs; particularly, to receive and distribute collections for the poor, to furnish the table of the Lord, and to provide for the support of such elders, whose time and service are devoted to the church. — 1 Tim. iii. 8—10. Acts vi. 1—3.

Q. 52. What number of elders and deacons should there be in any particular church?

A. Though it be very evident, that, in the days of the apostles, the same church had several elders and several deacons, yet it doth not appear, that every church had the same number of either, nor is any certain number fixed in the New Testament. Every church, therefore, must regulate the number of its elders and deacons by the extent and weight of its service, always keeping in view the edification and comfort of the whole body. — 1 Cor. xiv. 26. last clause. 40. Eph. iv. 12.

Q. 53. How are private members to be constituted officers in a Christian church?

A. By the election of the church, with fasting, and prayer; to which, in the opinion of many, should be added imposition of hands. — Acts vi. 3, 5, 6. ch. xiii. 2, 3. ch. xiv. 23. 1 Tim. v. 22.

Q. 54. Why is the election of the church necessary to constitute an officer in it?

A. Christ hath directed his churches to chuse their own officers, as we see by the first Christian church on earth; and his kingdom is a state of order and holy freedom, in which no man hath a right to exercise any office, until he is chosen to it by the church. — Acts vi. 2—6. Eph. i. 22, 23. Col. ii. 5. 1 Cor. vii. 22, 23. Gal. v. 1. 2 Cor. i. 24. Matt. xx. 25—28.

Q. 55. In what light is imposition of hands, in the ordination of church-officers, to be considered?

A. Not as conveying any authority, gift or ability for office; for it doth not appear, that it was ever used for such ends in the ordination of any *ordinary* officers in the church of Christ: but, as the primitive and divinely approved mode of separating persons to office, and commending them to the

the grace of God. — Gen. xlviii. 14, 20.
Numb. viii. 9, 10. ch. xxvii. 18, 19, 23.
Acts vi. 6. ch. xiii. 3.

Q. 56. How is a Christian church to be continued and increased?

A. By a proper discharge of duty to the seed of the church, and by receiving such of those who desire admission, as appear to be proper subjects of such holy fellowship. — Ps. xlv. 16, 17. Isa. lix. 20, 21. Acts ii. 41, 47.

Q. 57. In what light are the children of church-members to be considered?

A. Such children are to be considered as externally holy, separated to the Lord, and subjects of his visible kingdom, with their parents, from their birth; and they are to be acknowledged as such by baptism in their infancy. — Acts ii. 38, 39. 1 Cor. vii. 14. Rom. xi. 16. Matt. xix. 14. Acts xv. 10. ch. xvi. 15, 33.

Q. 58. What is the duty of a church in respect to such children?

A. To acknowledge them as a part of itself, though not yet capable of enjoying

all the privileges, nor of discharging all the duties, of adult church-members; and to see that they be well instructed in the nature, doctrines, order, institutions, privileges, and duties of the kingdom of Christ; that they attend the social instruction and worship of the church,—and that the elders personally teach, admonish, and guide them, as circumstances may require.

—Rom. xii. 4, 5. 1 Cor. xii. 22—27. John xxi. 15. last clause. Eph. vi. 1, 4. Col. iii. 20, 21. ch. iv. 17.

Q. 59. If such children, when come to years of understanding, desire full communion with the church, how are they to be admitted?

A. Upon signifying their desire, making a profession of their faith in Christ, acknowledging the obligations of their Baptism, and giving evidence of their sincerity by the conformity of their tempers and lives to the gospel, they are to be admitted to full communion. — Ps. cx. 3. 1 Pet. ii. 2—5. Rom. x. 9, 10. Gal. iii. 27. Rom. vi. 3, 4. Phil. ii. 5. 1 John ii. 6. Ps. xlv. 16. Eph. vi. 4.

Q. 60. Who

Q. 60. Who must judge concerning the Christian character of those, who desire admission to full communion?

A. The right of judging, as well as the power of admitting, is vested in the church at large, all the members having an equal interest in the unity and purity of the body, and an equal claim to be satisfied concerning the Christian character of those, with whom they are to walk in Gospel-fellowship; but in this, as in all other cases, due regard should be had to the judgment and advice of the officers. — 1 Cor. v. 12. Acts ix. 26—28. Rev. ii. 2. Heb. xiii. 7, 17.

Q. 61. How is a church to judge whether those who desire Christian communion are proper subjects for it?

A. By attending diligently and impartially to their profession of faith and manner of life, a correspondence of which to the word of Christ is the proper evidence of true discipleship. — Acts viii. 37. ch. xix. 18—20. 1 Theff. iv. 7. John xv. 14.

Q. 62. What profession of faith may a church require of those who desire admission?

A. An explicit declaration of their believing and cordially receiving the truth of the Gospel in general, and of its leading Doctrines in particular, especially those which relate to the person, character, offices, and work of Christ; of their dependence on him alone for justification before God; and of their willing subjection to his authority in all things. — 1 John iv. 1, 2. Acts viii. 37. ch. xvi. 15, 31—34. Rom. x. 9—13. ch. iii. 22—26. Ps. xlv. 11. John xv. 14.

Q. 63. If persons, who desire admission, have never been baptized, how are they to be admitted?

A. All such persons, professing their faith in Christ and their cordial subjection to him, are to be baptized, and so, by the consent of the church, received into full communion. — Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. ch. xi. 29. Acts ii. 41, 42. ch. xviii. 8.

Q. 64. What

Q. 64. What are the special duties of church-members one towards another ?

A. To walk in love without dissimulation ; to adhere firmly together in all times of trial ; to sympathize with one another under all afflictions ; to bear one another's infirmities with meekness and compassion ; to converse frequently with each other for edification ; to watch over each other's conversation and conduct with fidelity and love ; to give and receive admonition with humility and tenderness ; to excite one another to love and to all good works ; to cultivate harmony one with another ; and, in all things, with readiness and zeal, to seek and promote the prosperity and comfort of the whole body, and of every member of it. — Eph. v. 1, 2. Rom. xii. 9, 10. John xiii. 34, 35. 1 Pet. i. 22. Heb. x. 25. 1 Cor. xii. 26. Gal. vi. 2. Mal. ii. 16. Col. iv. 6. Rom. xiv. 19. Heb. iii. 13. Matt. xviii. 15. Gal. vi. 1. Heb. xii. 14—16. Eph. iv. 3. 1 Theff. v. 13. last clause. Phil. ii. 3, 4. Gal. vi. 9, 10.

Q. 65. What

Q. 65. What are the duties of church-members to their elders?

A. To esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake; to obey them in the faithful discharge of their duty according to the word of Christ; to be much in prayer to God for them; to abide by them and strengthen their hands under all their trials and sufferings in the way of duty; to imitate their example, so far as they follow Christ; and to provide for the comfortable support of those, who labour in word and doctrine. — 1 Tim. v. 17. 1 Theff. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 17. 2 Theff. iii. 1. 2 Tim. iv. 16. Phil. iv. 14. Heb. xiii. 7. 1 Cor. xi. 1. Gal. vi. 6. 1 Cor. ix. 7—14.

Q. 66. If any member should trespass against, or grieve another, by disobedience to the laws of Christ, what is then the duty of the offended member?

A. Not to publish the matter, but to go and converse privately with the offender, endeavouring in faithfulness and love to convince

convince and reclaim him. — Lev. xix. 17. Matt. xviii. 15. Luke xvii. 3, 4.

Q. 67. If the offending member be not thereby reclaimed, what is the next step to be taken?

A. The member, who first admonished privately, must take with him one or two of the brethren, and with them must again endeavour to convince and reclaim the offending member. — Deut. xix. 15. Matt. xviii. 16.

Q. 68. If this be found ineffectual, what doth the word of Christ further direct?

A. The matter must then be laid before the church, and the church, upon receiving good evidence of the complaint, must, by its elders, admonish the offender, with the view of bringing him to repentance. — Matt. xviii. 17.

Q. 69. How often is a church to admonish in such cases, before it proceeds to exclusion?

A. If the first admonition be not effectual, the church must admonish a second time, before it proceeds to exclusion, unless in cases

cases of open and scandalous sin. — Tit. iii. 10. Jude 22, 23.

Q. 70. If the offending member be not reclaimed by the repeated admonition of the church, what is then its duty?

A. The church is then, in the name of Christ, to withdraw from such an one, by declaring him to be no longer a member with them. — Matt. xviii. 17. 2 Thess. iii. 6. Rom. xvi. 17.

Q. 71. How is the church to proceed, when any of its members are guilty of open and scandalous sins?

A. The truth of facts being first ascertained, the church must then testify its subjection to Christ, its hatred of sin, and its zeal for holiness, by immediately putting away such prophane persons from among them, with earnest prayer to God, that this awful measure may be rendered effectual to lead them to repentance. — 1 Cor. v. 3, 4, 5, 7, 11—13.

Q. 72. If any, who have been excluded, afterwards give good evidence of repentance.

pentance, what is the duty of the Church in respect to them?

A. Upon the profession and evidence of their repentance, and their desire of being re-admitted, the Church must receive them again, with humble thankfulness for their recovery.—2 Cor. ii. 6—8. Matt. xviii. 18.

Q. 73. Should the Churches of Christ hold Communion one with another?

A. As they are all united to one Head, hold the same faith, and walk by the same rule, it is both their duty and their privilege to hold Communion one with another.—Eph. i. 22, 23. ch. iv. 4—6. Phil. iii. 16. 1 Cor. xii. 12—14, 27.

Q. 74. What are the duties of Churches one towards another?

A. To walk circumspectly, so as to give no just cause of offence to each other; to seek, and pray for, each other's peace and welfare; to dismiss and receive members by letters of recommendation; to assist one another under temporal wants and necessities; and to make use of each other's counsel.

fel in cafes of difficulty and importance.

— 1 Cor. x. 32, 33. Eph. iv. 3, 4.
Pf. cxxii. 6. Eph. vi. 18. Col. iv. 10.
Rom. xvi. 1, 2. 2 Cor. iii. 1. Acts xviii.
27. ch. xi. 29, 30. ch. xv. 1—35.

Q. 75. May obedience to the laws of Christ be enforced by any human authority?

A. By no means; for this would be usurping the authority of Christ, destroying the freedom of his subjects, and depriving them of the proper opportunity of testifying their subjection to him. — Christ alone is the King of his Church, and no authority but His must ever be acknowledged in it. All his subjects are a willing people, and his authority and blessing with his ordinances, will always be sufficient and effectual to secure their subjection and obedience. — Isa. xxxiii. 22. John xviii. 36. Matt. xxiii. 8—11. 2 Cor. x. 3—6. Pf. cx. 3. Col. i. 6, 9, 10, 11.

Q. 76. What divine promises are given to Christians walking according to the order of the Gospel?

A. Many

A. Many great and precious promises are given peculiarly to them, in their connected state, by which the Lord hath engaged to preserve, support, and protect his Church—to bless the provisions of his house—to dwell among his people—to take care of them on earth—and to conduct them safely to heaven.——Isa. xxvii. 3. Ps. cxxxii. 13—18. Isa. lx. and lxi. throughout. Matt. xvi. 18. 2 Cor. vi. 16—18. John xv. 14, 17. Eph. v. 25, 27. Jude 24.

Q. 77. What are the great ends for which this order is instituted in the kingdom of Christ?

A. The conversion of sinners; the edification and comfort of believers; the honour of Christ as Mediator; and the illustrious display of all divine perfections in the full and everlasting salvation of the whole Church.——Isa. ii. 2, 3. Ps. xlv. 3—6. 1 Cor. xiv. 26. Eph. iv. 11—16. ch. i. 3—10. Phil. ii. 9, 11. John v. 23. Rev. iv. 11. ch. v. 9—14. ch. xv. 3, 4. ch. xxi. 22—27. ch. xxii. 3—5.



